

## Jacqui True: Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism

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glects any normative judgment that could distinguish emancipatory difference claims from exclusive ones and justifiable claims for redistribution from unjustifiable ones. Fraser argues that the politics of difference is not globally applicable; she assumes that there are many different kinds of differences, which require the application of different kinds of remedies. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a critical theory of recognition that would entail 'a more differentiated politics of difference' (p. 204). In 'False Antithesis' Fraser responds to Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler in an effort to do away with the false antithesis of Critical Theory and post-structuralism, or, put otherwise, to integrate the normative and the discursive in the conception of subjectivity. Finally, in 'Beyond the Master/Subject Model' Fraser discusses Carole Pateman's view of sexual contract and argues that Pateman underestimates the structural mechanisms that generate new forms of subordination that differ from the classical master/subject model.

Although Fraser's guiding aim in *Justice Interruptus* is to advocate her two-dimensional theory of justice, in her more recent work, as mentioned above, she has reformulated her theoretical project and instead proposes a three-dimensional theory, which corresponds to the acceleration of globalisation that makes the 'Westphalian' territorial-state frame more complex and opens up a new set of political struggles related to representation. 'Explicitly thematizing the problem of the frame, this notion points to yet another class of obstacles to justice: neither economic nor cultural, but political. Representation, accordingly, constitutes a third, *political* dimension of social justice, alongside the (economic) dimension of redistribution and the (cultural) dimension of recognition.' [Fraser and Hrubec 2004: 887] Fraser is therefore currently developing a critical theory of global justice by turning her attention to the question of the frame, which she aims to integrate with her previous approach.

Zuzana Uhde

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## Jacqui True: *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism*

New York 2003: Columbia University Press, 272 pp.

In *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism*, the political scientist Jacqui True addresses the ways in which gender influences the processes of globalisation in the post-socialist Czech Republic. She analyses historical documents, scholarship and archival materials in English and Czech, and personal interviews conducted in Prague between 1995 and 1999. After providing some contextual information, True goes on to analyse aspects of gender in the family, the labour market, commercial markets, and women's organisations after 1989. As a framework for the analysis of these cases, True discusses the interpretive value of neo-liberal, Marxist, feminist, and institutionalist theoretical approaches for the study of post-socialist transformations and argues that each of these popular theories provides inadequate explanations when used alone. True is interested in analysing the 'dynamic interplay between local practices and global forces in the postsocialist context' and does so by drawing on what she identifies as 'neo-Gramscian, institutionalist, and feminist theories', focusing particularly on how gender operates to inflect these dynamic processes (p. 25). True uses a three-part definition of gender in her analysis that encompasses ideologies, inequalities, and

political identities, and she links these facets of gender to the concept of 'common sense' (p. 26). She writes, 'I view historically specific, common sense ideas about male and female human nature as being encoded in social practices. In turn, these encodings shape state and civil society, and the forces of production and reproduction in transitions to "capitalist democracy"' (p. 26).

In the first two chapters, True presents the reader with a brief discussion of what she sees as some key moments in Czech and Czechoslovak history as regards gender relations and politics and argues that these events are crucial to understanding the context of the late 1990s, which is the focus of the book. She discusses the ways in which gender was implicated in the workings of the socialist planned economy in terms of the horizontal and vertical gender differentiation of industries and professions and the differentiation of tasks within sectors. She argues that a 'gender regime' existed despite the official rhetoric of equality, and it carried over into the private sphere, contributing to women's double burden of work and family responsibilities (p. 28). She then discusses the development of 'an independent women's movement' during the Prague Spring in 1967–1969 (p. 39). She locates this movement in the activities of the Czechoslovak Women's Union (CWU) in 1967, and she draws on the debates that went on in the pages of the CWU's magazine *Vlasta* around that time to illustrate some of the issues of the day. She argues that in 1968 *Vlasta* briefly opened up a 'new discursive space for feminism', until the magazine was censored in 1969 (p. 43). She also cites the creation of Charter 77 as an example of 'gender solidarity' among dissidents and mentions the role of women in the dissident movement (p. 49), and she contrasts what she calls the 'new de facto "feminist" discourse and movement' of 1968 with the 'socially conservative ideas about appropriate gender roles' prevalent after 1989 (p. 52).

After introducing the context of the discussion, True devotes a chapter to each of

the four aspects of gender in her analysis. In Chapter 3, for example, she discusses the family, arguing that 'successive Czech governments have used the family, and in particular women's labor in the family-household, to facilitate the shift from the state to the market system' (p. 55), and she criticises these policies for inadequately addressing several aspects of life, including the housing shortage, declining marriage rates, and declining fertility rates (p. 71). In True's opinion this inadequacy is an indication that government policy is out of step with the actual changes in gender relations and definitions in Czech society. In Chapter 4 True discusses women's participation in the labour market, noting that 'gender relationships have become salient distinctions used to sort out new labor and property relations in the Czech lands since 1989' (p. 74). She uses the concept of a 'three-tiered labor market', comprised of a highly skilled 'labor aristocracy', low-skilled 'precarious workers', and 'unofficial workers' working illegally or in illegal activities (p. 79–80), and in discussing gender stratification in the workplace she further distinguishes between the 'former socialist *public* sector' and 'the nascent *private* sector', and between domestic and foreign firms (p. 80). True concludes this chapter with a discussion of sexual harassment and work in the sex industry, in relation to both cases briefly addressing the impact of EU law on the Czech legal system, and she claims that 'the Czech government has used a considerable amount of EU financial assistance to translate documents and make amendments to national legislation, none of which has resulted in any change in the sexist culture [of] Czech politics, let alone in Czech workplaces' (p. 100).

In the discussion of how 'capitalist expansion in Eastern Europe has been promoted by the marketing of gender identities in global culture industries and consumer advertising' (p. 103), True analyses the use of nudity and female bodies in magazine and billboard advertisements, which she argues

emphasises certain differences between women and men and produces gendered consumer groups. She situates these trends in advertising within the wider context of the globalisation of 'culture industries', such as film, music, and fashion (p. 105). True moves on from this analysis to discuss what she sees as the significance of two products marketed to women – the Czech editions of Harlequin novels and *Cosmopolitan* magazine – for 'providing a public forum where women can air the problems of daily life and their dissatisfaction with the gender regime of state socialism and postsocialist democracy' (p. 117), drawing a parallel with the role that she argues *Vlasta* played in 1968.

The final case that True analyses is that of women's organisations after 1989. Using a neo-Gramscian framework, she starts off by briefly summarising the theoretical perspectives on civil society before and after 1989. She goes on to discuss women's participation in politics, the 'masculinization of the public sphere' (p. 137), and the 'feminization of the civic sphere' (p. 147). She then evaluates the success and failure of four examples of women's organisations in the Czech Republic. The first two – the Women-Friendly Response to Violence against Women project, and the Network of East-West Women – are discussed in terms of their relation to 'American feminism and NGOization' (p. 152), and the second two – Project Parity, and the Czech Women's Union – in relation to EU accession activities. She argues that although women are not adequately represented in formal political structures, their work in organisations has allowed them to nonetheless participate in building democracy.

It is particularly interesting to see what the scholars who completed research projects in the 1990s have made of their data. In *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism*, True captures some of the popular debates of the time, such as the debate surrounding sexual harassment or the role of *Cosmopolitan* magazine as a subversive voice, and ongoing debates over, for example, the role of women in

politics, explanations for declining fertility rates and postponed childbearing, and the politics of European Union funding for NGOs. However, True's discussion raises a number of concerns, as although the concepts of global and local play figure prominently in the analysis, and although True is careful to define many of the other key terms she uses, she neglects to offer any critical reflection on the meaning of these terms. While she insists that notions of global and local should be analysed as a set of interactions rather than separate processes, without referring to the critical scholarship on these terms she runs the risk of perpetuating the appearance of a vague western globality and Czech specificity.

Another problem is the way in which True uses the term 'women's movement' to characterise the activities of the Czechoslovak Women's Union in 1967 (p. 39). Without any discussion of how she defines a social movement or dealing with social movement theories, it is hard to accept the idea that the actions of a small number of women sitting on a Communist Party Central Committee and agitating for reform constitutes a women's movement. While True presents convincing evidence of arguably feminist sentiment among CWU organisers during this period and in the content of *Vlasta* in 1968, a clearer discussion of the definition of the concept of a movement is needed. Judging by her discussion of women's organisations in the 1960s and the 1990s, it seems that True, like many of us, is eager to find evidence of a grassroots women's movement in the Czech Republic. Although there are some compelling reasons why establishing wider support for feminism would benefit women's organisations (see Kapusta-Pofahl, Hašková and Kolařová 2006), analyses that draw in alternative theories of resistance that incorporate non-movement activism (but also widen the field of analysis beyond organisation in the form of NGOs) could also help move the understanding of Czech feminist activism forward, particularly in cases, like many of those discussed by

True, where neither the social movement nor the NGO models are adequate.

*Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism* will be of interest to students and scholars in a wide range of fields, including gender studies, sociology, and political science. It is written in an accessible style suitable for use in the classroom.

Karen Kapusta-Pofahl

## References

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## Milada Anna Vachudova: *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism*

Oxford 2005: Oxford University Press, 341 pp.

The central concern of *Europe Undivided* lies with the divergent political trajectories of Central and Eastern European (CEE) states in the process of transition from integral units of the erstwhile 'communist bloc' to prospective membership in the European Union. The work focuses on six CEE states in particular: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, and argues that notwithstanding national particularities two broad overall patterns of 'transition' can be identified. The first of these involves the progressive reconstruction of these states along classical liberal-democratic lines; complete with the conventional institutional architecture of a liberal state and a functioning competitive electoral system based upon adult suffrage. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are reckoned as fitting this first pattern, while Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia are identified as 'deviants' that depart from this model. This latter group are characterised by the author as

'illiberal democracies', and a significant component of the overall argument of the work is concerned with accounting for their 'deviance'. Yet the core concern of the work is with the role of the European Union as a facilitator and regulator of political reconstruction projects in CEE after 1989–91. The work makes its most significant contribution to the ever-expanding literature on CEE 'transition(s)' with its elaboration of a detailed concept of 'leverage' with respect to the influence of the EU in CEE political reconstruction. In this respect, though not expressly formulated as such, the work aspires towards the development of a more general model of post-communist 'transition', in which the role of the EU is placed centre-stage.

Vachudova argues that the EU exerts two distinct kinds of 'leverage' over political developments in CEE states. The first – 'passive leverage' – refers to the kind of 'gravitational pull' of the EU as a political and economic bloc. This is reflected in the positive appeal of the EU as a political and economic entity to political elites in CEE states, and in the perception of EU membership as a potential 'prize' to be won in the course of successful political reconstruction. Yet it is also reflected in the asymmetrical structural relationships that exist between members of the EU and non-member states. The latter find themselves structurally disadvantaged economically as they individually face global competitive economic pressures without the support and protection provided by the EU to its members. In this respect, the simple existence of the EU as a political and economic bloc in conditions of intensifying global economic competition induces CEE states to re-orient themselves towards the EU and to aspire to EU membership, by default, as it were. Therefore, remaining aloof from the EU is not a genuinely sustainable option in the long-term for such states and particularly given the economic destruction and dislocation that accompanied the early years of 'transition' for CEE states.

The second kind of leverage, active leverage, differs from the first both tempo-